11633. c. 3

THE RIVAL WIVES.

Or, the GREETING of *CLARISSA* to *SKIRRA* IN THE ELYSIAN SHADES.

HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
LONDON

THE

RIVAL WIVES.

SCARCE had the Ghosts of *Pluto*'s gloomy Shade
Lull'd the loud Storm *Clarissa*'s Coming made;
The roaring *Styx* was just grown calm again.
And Mirth possest the wide *Tartarean* Plain;
When lo! a second Noise invades their Ears,
And louder Tumults shape their growing Fears,
Strait a huge Dæmon, in a hollow Sound,
Proclaims th' unwelcome baneful News around;
" Prepare, ye Slaves! he cries, your Queen to meet;
" Fame SKIRRA comes! ye d—— her Presence greet!
Through all the vaulted Domes the Message flies,
They reach e'en *Pluto*'s Mansion with their Cries.

So when to *Tothill*, or to *Clerkenwell*,
Some Nymph is sent, for Crimes too vile to tell;
If with lac'd Cap, or silken Gown she's blest,
Due Reverence she claims from all the rest;
A more than usual Noise the Dungeon rends,
Which louder still from Cell to Cell descends:
The Keeper cries, " Make room for Madam there;
While all the hungry, starving Wretches stare.

In a lone Shade, with deadly Henbane ſpread,
Clariſſa drooping hangs her ſhameful Head;
When SKIRRA's Name ſhe hears, malicious Smiles
Riſe in her Face, and all her Boſom boils;
Revenge! my Soul, ſhe cries, my Rival's come---
This, ſince ſhe ſhares it, is no dreadful Doom;
But yet there wants one *Shadow* more than this,
A *THIRD* ſtill greater: That would make it Bliſs:
Ha! there ſhe glides! perfidious Shade, yet ſtay!
And hear what Rage and Vengeance bid me ſay.

Wrong'd as I was, in Perſon and in Fame,
I'll now the Cauſe of all my Wrongs proclaim:
If trifling Errors to my Share did fall,
'Twas ſome Excuſe, you, Monſter! caus'd them all.
By fond Affection mov'd, I met my Lord,
Chear'd by his Look, obedient to his Word;
The nuptial Tie cou'd ne'er two Hearts unite,
More form'd for mutual Tranſport and Delight:
Swift wing'd with Love, the Moments gayly flew,
Each Bliſs, though oft repeated, ſtill was new;
Love's fragrant Bloſſom, opening to the Sun,
'Till thou, curſt Sorc'reſs! like a Blight came on:
'Twas then my *BUFO*, ſlighting all his Vows,
The Marriage Band, the tender Name of Spouſe,
Firſt from the menial Herd ſelected Thee,
To raiſe Thee high at once to ruin Me:

What Beauties had'ſt thou? what prevailing Charms
Could thou e'er boaſt, to draw him to thy Arms?
No Birth, no Titles grac'd thee, mean, and low;
Thy Blood in vulgar Channels wont to flow.
Awhile, unknowing of the fatal Guile,
I innocently met him with a Smile;
O had the Secret ſtill been kept unknown,
I had been happy---I'd been wrong'd alone;
But buſy Tongues convey'd it to my Ears,
And too-ſufficient Proofs confirm'd my Fears:
Inſtead of Poverty, and humble State,
I ſaw an Equipage around thee wait;
And found too late that thou by Pride were grown
The Scorn and Envy of the cens'ring Town.
Mad to be thus deſpis'd,---frantick and wild,
Of Honour's Ties, and Reaſon's Guide beguil'd,
I flew for my Revenge, alas! to what?
All Senſe of Virtue, Shame, and Friends forgot,
Enrag'd at him, my own Deſtruction ſought.
While ſecret Pleaſure, and exulting Pride
Taught thee my little Failings to deride.
Plung'd in a Sea of Vice, I waded through,
And all the Plea I had was —— Monſter! — you.
Tho' baniſh'd from his Bed, yet ſtill I ſtrove
By various Services to gain his Love:
While you in Riot, void of Senſe or Shame,
Still ſhar'd his Paſſion by a ſhocking Name.

'Twas

'Twas ſaid, and vulgar Tongues ſoon ſpread it round.
If not with Charms, you did with Senſe abound;
That ſtrict Diſcretion, 'bove the Reach of Man,
Taught You the Politician's Thoughts to ſcan;
Hence he his Councils form'd, and ev'ry Scheme
Ow'd its Prodigious Birth to You, not Him:
As Conjurors of old had Spirits wait,
Who, all that chanc'd, would to their Lords relate:
Hence You and He alike were blam'd or prais'd,
As the unthinking Multitude were pleas'd.
That fatal Day's Miſhap you needs muſt know,
When his GREAT SCHEME of all receiv'd a Blow;
The Mob enrag'd, a hapleſs Female tore
Forth from her Coach, and that was You they ſwore;
Their well-tim'd Rage, had they but gueſs'd aright,
Had ended all my Pains and Fears that Night.
To ſee You thus exalted, high in Power,
And I forlorn, yet even this I bore;
The World by Fortune blinded, made their Court
To You, who'd lately been their Game and Sport.
Hence view the vain Deluſions of Mankind,
How Riches dazzle, and how Titles blind!
If *Great*, ne'er ſtick at Vice---Who dare defame?
The vicious *Poor* alone can merit Shame.
L---ds with Impunity each Moment cheat,
For what low petty Rogues their Fate would meet;
And what our Anceſtors would deem a *Crime*,
Is grown a *Virtue* by the Courſe of Time.

Men

Men now may *Keep*; their Ladies Freedoms take;
Each Knight his Whore, each Lady has her Rake;
Scandal and Spleen in vain their Venom ſpit,
To be gallant and lewd is tip-top Wit.
Like *Rubra*, or like *You*, they ſcorn to wed,
Yet boaſt the Shame of a polluted Bed;
Think Vice is poor, unleſs 'tis publick ſhewn,
And lead their *Baſtard Offspring* through the Town.

This I endur'd, no Recompence I fought,
Reſign'd entirely up to Care and Thought:
For this the tributary Shore I drain'd,
And half the Riches of the Sea diſtrain'd:
All Nature did the wondrous Work impart,
And ſtraight the *Grotto* roſe, compleat in Art:
O bliſsful Scenes! I could not then divine,
That for ſo foul a Gem I form'd that Shrine;
I ſunk at laſt oppreſt with Shame and Grief,
Glad to reſign the poor Remains of Life:
One laſt Farewel I ask'd, the ſad Requeſt
Rais'd freſh Emotions in my troubled Breaſt;
Conſcious how much your Pow'r prevail'd: This Boon,
Cried I, this Favour I entreat alone;
" Since Fate thus ſevers our united Hands,
" You never more would join in nuptial Bands:
By all our firſt fond Loves, I urg'd my Pray'r,
And begg'd the *Dear Inconſtant* he would ſwear.

So thrive I, ſaid he, in whate'er I do,
As now I keep this Promiſe made to you;
Ne'er ſhall theſe Hands again receive a Mate,
Ne'er will I enter on the Marriage State:
Perfidious Wretch! how well thou'ſt kept thy Vows,
SKIRRA, deceitful, cunning SKIRRA knows:
Pleas'd with his Promiſe, I reſign'd my Breath,
And yielded to the frozen Arms of Death.
Scarce had the Earth entomb'd my ſad Remains,
And freed me from the Dread of earthly Pains;
The ſtarting Tear wip'd from the Mourner's Eye,
Though feign'd, and forc'd, was yet but ſcarcely dry,
When! Shame to tell! with all the Fire of Youth,
Forgetting me, and Conſtancy and Truth;
'Spite of a ſneering World, whoſe envious Smiles
Exulted now at all his artful Wiles,
He *Wedded* thee, and the ſame Vows he ſwore,
Renew'd to thee, he'd gave to me before.
What *Charms*, what *Arts*, what *Cunning* couldſt thou uſe,
To draw ſo *Wiſe a Man* to ſuch a Nooſe?
I've heard, by *Drugs*, too ſtrong to be withſtood,
Women have oft bewitch'd Man's roving Blood:
Could'ſt thou do this? ---- What Drugs, what Charms
have Pow'r
To give freſh Youth to feeble dull *Fourſcore?*
The aged Letchers at ſome Face that's new,
Whene'er ſome blooming Beauty come's in View,

Feel

Feel ſudden Pains, Deſires that once could move,
Tormented, tho' not pleas'd, with *Qualms* of Love.

But who in Fancy dull, firſt keeps a Miſs,
Ugly, not form'd to give Delight or Bliſs;
Who for whole Years retains th' imperious Dame,
Bully'd, not *charm'd* into an am'rous Flame:
Should he, to ſtop the World in Cenſure bold,
Make her his Wife, when impotent and old,
Would not Mankind agree in general Votes,
He's *mad*, or elſe in *ſecond Childhood* doats?
Where was the *Gout?* Why ceas'd the *Gravel*'s Rage?
Or did thy Eloquence his Pains aſſwage?

O envy not, ye Fair! the Men their Sex,
Whom thouſand Cares, and thouſand Ills perplex,
Nor think them bleſt, 'cauſe they may freely rove
Unbounded through the Labyrinths of Love.
Rove not we freely, when in high Diſdain
Of Virtue's Struggles, or of Honour's Stain,
The Man we love we take, whole Years enjoy,
Nor Cenſure, Care, nor Scandal, can annoy;
Since in the End the myſtic *Prieſt* beſtows
The very *Virtue* we at firſt did loſe?

Fix'd in theſe dark Abodes I felt no Reſt,
But one continual Canker gnaw'd my Breaſt;

Still for his Good my Heart with Ardour glow'd,
And this falſe Step in friendly Dreams I ſhow'd:
At midnight Hours from my dark Cavern freed,
I travers'd all the buſy Town with Speed,
To know their diff'rent Judgments on this Deed.
His Friends (tho' few they were) with o'ercaſt Brows,
A diſcontented Sorrow did diſcloſe;
None could with Smiles approve, howe'er polite;
No *Gazetteer* a Compliment could write.
While pleas'd, the *Courtier* ſmiles, the *Farmer* ſings,
This to their Cauſe, they think, new Comfort brings;
The chearful Merchant fills his flowing Bowl,
And with new Tranſports elevates his Soul:
While each agrees to join the gen'ral Voice,
That he has ſhew'd his Folly in this Choice;
Hence did they ſit preſaging o'er their Wine
His *Judgment*'s Failure, and his quick *Decline*.

Next to the fatal Scene my Spirit hy'd,
And ſaw thee deck'd, new-made an *honeſt Bride*;
While on thy Heart a little *Dæmon* ſate,
Swell'd with Ambition, and with Pride elate.
The Bed was deck'd with all the Pomp of Love,
And ſeem'd the Image of the *Idalian Grove*.
He, like *Adonis* dreſt, limp'd on behind,
Age in *Limbs*, though *Youth* was in his *Mind*.
On the ſoft Scene, enrag'd, I ſaw you laid,
With no fierce Joys your Slumbers to invade.

Next Morn the *Levee*'s Farce with Smiles I view'd,
Through various antick Characters purſu'd :
A Reverend Lawn with Scrapes his Homage pays,
Though Conſcience gives the Lye to all he ſays.
One ſtrait finds out you're born of noble Birth,
And that your Beauty charms all Men on Earth :
While in your Anti-chamber humbly wait
Ladies of Rank, Condition, and Eſtate.
All Scandal ſilenc'd ; rich and virtuous grown,
You claim a Rank now equal to their own.
So much can Fortune dazzle in this Caſe,
That on a *Poſt* or *Log* a *Ribbon* place,
The Mob revere, and ſtrait it ſhines His Grace.
And ev'ry Wench pick'd from the ſervile Croud,
If by ſome Man of Quality avow'd,
Is dubb'd *My Lady*; and each Wretch before
That ſhunn'd her Sight, and ſhov'd her from his Door ;
Now cringing humbly at each Motion bends,
For Favours ſues, and on her Smiles depends :
We've loſt the ancient Virtue of our Sires,
'Tis not intrinſick Worth the World admires ;
Nonſenſe and Noiſe can now alone engage,
Aſſurance, Titles, Dreſs, and Equipage.

Then ſunk ingloriouſly in Sloth and Eaſe,
Like *Anthony* he liv'd, but You to pleaſe ;
The World neglected was, and *Britain* mourn'd,
Until her St--teſm--n's Senſes were return'd :

Unhappy He! whole Days to give to You,
Who nobler Trophies ſhould have had in View.
St. J---n in State Affairs the Mark could hit,
And temper *Politicks* with *Love* and *Wit*:
From that *ſoft Desk*, wou'd fire the Hermit's Soul,
He ſent Diſpatches round from Pole to Pole.
Would *Fl--ry* for the *Miſtreſs of his Heart*
One Moment from the *Cabinet* depart?
Or would *Le Quadra* chuſe the *Am'rous Scene?*
Though he had nought to do but hear poor *K---*
Theſe while their Country bleeds, all ſcorn to *ſleep*,
Yet You your *Hero* in fond Dalliance keep:
Debas'd, he cry'd, let who will *rule the Main*,
I for this Kiſs would give up all to *S----n*.

More *brilliant* next at C---t I ſaw you ſhine,
Where all the Flatt'rers in your Praiſes join,
Ten thouſand ſpreading Scandals me defame,
Each Prude takes Pleaſure to revile my Name;
While you triumphant on my Ruins riſe,
And gild your Vices with the rich Diſguiſe.
Amaz'd, confounded, to my Shades I flew,
Unable to ſuſtain another View:
This only Comfort eas'd my anxious Pain,
I knew your Tranſports could not long remain.
But as for me, why ſhould the buſy Tongues,
Unmov'd, repeat my Errors, not my Wrongs?

Whom

Whom have I hurt?----What envious Wretch can ſay,
The Poor from me, unpity'd, went away?
The low, diſtreſs'd, in me ſtill found a *Friend*,
And all that on my Bounty did depend.
No Pride, no Oſtentation, ſpoil'd my Boon,
The Benefit beſtow'd, forgot as ſoon.
Say, when with Affluence bleſt, couldſt thou e'er boaſt
Any that met Aſſiſtance at thy Coſt?
Still from thy Door the Poor and Needy fled,
Nor ſought the Hungry, there, their daily Bread:
Yet Calumny and Shame my Mem'ry wait
For Errors known too well, and found too late.
Vice, if ſucceſsful, loſes ſtrait its Name;
If unſucceſsful, meets with certain Shame.
Yet let the partial World judge how it may,
Juſtice uncloſes all one fatal Day;
Bares the gall'd Conſcience, and betrays its Guilt,
Purſues the Murd'rer for the Blood he's ſpilt.
In vain the Villain's hid in ſpecious Forms,
Unerring Juſtice all his Fraud diſarms,
Regards the gaudy *Robe* no more than Rags,
And damns the Miſer with his hoarded Bags;
Pulls Regal Pride, and ſtern Oppreſſion, down,
And ſpoils the Tyrant of his ill-got Crown:
Till this ſad Day here doom'd with me to rove,
And ſhare the Horrors of this gloomy Grove.
You, SKIRRA! as you once partook my State,
Shall now partake the Terrors of my Fate.

O!

O! how unlike the fond luxuriant Bliſs,
That Earth once gave thee, are the Pains of this.
Inſtead of *R--hm--d* Bow'rs and verdant Scenes,
Its riſing Landſcapes ſpread with Ever-greens;
The blighted Cypreſs, Henbane, and the Yew,
Invenom'd all, ſhall only meet your View!
No Grotto's form'd for Tranſport, Love, and Joy,
No downy Couch to meet the am'rous Boy;
But gloomy Shades and Cells, which void of Light,
Abound with dreary Phantoms of the Night:
No purling Streams, like *Thames*, the Shores to lave,
But black *Cocytus*' horrid roaring Wave;
And ſtill to make thy Torments more compleat,
In various Shapes my Image ſhalt thou meet:
Still bellowing in thy Ears, the curſed Cauſe
That this impartial Vengeance on thee draws;
Thy Crimes repeat, and in thy trembling Ears
Proclaim my Wrongs, and ſo augment thy Fears.

Thus will I ſay, now *Trait'reſs*, ſeek thy Lord,
And try what Joy his Preſence will afford!
Where's now thy gay Delights, thy wanton Mirth?
And all the Luxuries thou ſhar'dſt on Earth?
Now ravage *India*, and the Vaſſal Globe,
And Nature of her choiceſt Sweets diſrobe;
In Spices, like the Eaſtern Bird, expire,
And riſe more lovely from the balmy Fire:

With richeſt Viands now thy Table ſpread,
Richer than thoſe on which fam'd *Nero* fed;
Then dreſt in all th' Extravagance of Pride,
Thy *fond old Husband* ſitting by thy Side,
Drink *Pearls diſſolv'd*, the nobleſt thou can'ſt find,
And *riot* on the *Plunder of Mankind.*

Thus in tormenting Accents (ſtill thy Foe)
My Words ſhall double all thy Scenes of Woe:
From Shade to Shade I'll ſtill purſue thy Ghoſt,
Nor let one Moment of Deſpair be loſt.
Nay more, to give thee Pain, thou ſhalt behold
The Wonders which the myſtic Fates unfold;
How from dark Cauſes Embrio Miſchiefs riſe,
And fill th' admiring World with wild Surpriſe.
How *Europe* bleſſes her indulgent *Star*,
Boaſts ſettled *Peace*, yet ev'ry State's at *War*.
And when a flagrant Blunder I eſpy,
" SKIRRA! thy Love occaſion'd this," I'll cry.
See where the once fam'd *Empreſs of the Main*,
By *Pirates* robb'd, from Vengeance does refrain;
Sees *Europe*'s *Scum* defy her falling Pow'r
Her ruling FLAG inſulted, mock'd and tore;
Lethargic Slumbers all her Spirits ſeize,
And ſee, ſhe ſinks to Nothing by Degrees;
Her Sons with Ardour burn, each Boſom glows,
And would revenge the Inſults of their Foes.

But close confin'd by Pow'r and awful Sway,
Their Spirits ſink, inactive, to decay;
The *Britiſh* Lyons, quite degen'rate grown,
See themſelves robb'd, yet lie ſupinely down;
From martial Camps and Fields their Youth retire
To lulling Sounds, and female ſoft Deſire;
From the ſhrill *Trumpet's Clang*, the *Drum's loud Note*,
They fly enraptur'd, to an Eunuch's Throat.
'Twas not by ſuch as theſe that *Britain* roſe,
And quell'd the moſt obdurate of their Foes.
When the *Iberian*, o'er the trembling Main,
Threaten'd our Land with all the Strength of *Spain*,
ELIZA's Captains rous'd at once to Arms,
And met undauntedly their rude Alarms.
Had *Drake* or *Raleigh* then, as Heroes now,
Dreaded a rough ſcarr'd Face, or wrinkled Brow;
Or had they aim'd at nought but Dreſs and Eaſe,
Where then had been the Empire of the Seas?
Thus *Britain*'s ſunk in Sloth and Lux'ry drown'd,
The *Scorn* and *Dupe* of all the Nations round;
While haughty *Gaul* her growing Pow'r extends,
To ſov'reign Empire o'er Mankind pretends:
Where'er ſhe comes, Terror and Dread ſhe brings,
And gives contending Slaves her Vaſſal Kings.
In Arts and Arms, ſupreme, ſhe reigns alone,
And makes each grand Diſcovery her own.
How chang'd the Scene, in leſs than thrice ten Years,
Her Monarch then ſhrunk drooping with his Fears;

Submiſſively

Submiſſively for *Peace* and Quiet ſought,
When *Marlbro'* check'd her, and when *Eugene* fought;
Now ſee her rais'd in her Triumphal Car,
To bending *Europe* dictate Peace or War;
Nay, e'en the haughty *Porte* will condeſcend
T' accept her Mediation as her Friend:
But ruin'd *Corſica* finds to its Coſt,
That by her Friendſhip all its Rights are loſt.
Nor ſpreads ſhe thus her Sway by Force of Arms,
But by perſuaſive Guile, and wordy Charms;
By Friendſhip's ſpecious Lure th' Unwary draws;
The Weak, by ſeeming to eſpouſe her Cauſe:
Thus ſhe o'er All maintains unwonted State,
As if ſole Arbiter of *Europe*'s Fate.
Fleury, this Honour's thine! To lateſt Days
For this ſhall *France* record her Stateſman's Praiſe;
Their Offspring teach thy great Deſert to own,
And thy lov'd Buſt with living Laurels crown:
While *Britain*----but no more----now turn thy Eyes,
Where Virtue blooms beneath black northern Skies;
In *Ruſſian* Climes ſee Glory rear her Head,
And round the Univerſe her Triumphs ſpread.
Thither the hardy Vet'ran, full of Scars,
The Marks and Prize of many well-fought Wars,
For Refuge flies; ſtarv'd in his native Land,
But there's rewarded with a lib'ral Hand:
Cloy'd of inactive Life, there braves the Field,
Glad in his aged Arm his Sword to weild.

The brave rough Sailor, who enur'd to Toil,
Has oft enrich'd his Land with *India*'s Spoil,
Dar'd the harsh Waye, and triumph'd o'er the Main,
Yet fought at home his due Regard in vain;
There crown'd with Glory, and with Plenty bleſt,
By all the World makes ANNA's Pow'r confeſt.

But ſee a Cloud o'er *Britain* breaks—The Scene
Dreadfully looks, what can the Object mean?
A Sov'reign's Anger---injur'd Subjects Hate—
Plunder reſtor'd---Deſigns againſt the State—
Cheats---Contracts---Bubbles---Penſions idly paid—
Rich Cits---and ſturdy Beggars---Loſs of Trade—
Georgia—Gibralter—*Treaties made to break,*
Threatnings—Impeachments—ill-got Wealth at Stake,
A Scaffold and an Axe of monſtrous Size.
At this ſad Sight aghaſt each Shadow flies:
Skirra in vain evades *Clariſſa*'s Hate,
She ſtill purſues her ſwift as vengeful Fate;
Yet both confeſs their Sentence is not hard,
Knowing what Torment's for their Lord prepar'd.

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